

HISTORY: DENNY-BLAINE PARK

The pioneer realtors whose real estate was "way out of town" - like on the shores of Lake Washington - had the very real problem of attracting potential buyers over the few existing rutted and muddy roads. True, there were horse-drawn stages that rattled their way to favorite picnic spots along the lakeshore, but the ability to convert horse cars into trolley cars provided a fascinating new adjunct to real estate speculation and development. The more enterprising realtors built trolley or cable car lines from town or connected with other privately lines and usually terminated in an amusement park or pleasure resort to stimulate traffic with Sunday outings. Such was the case with Madrona Park. The developers of the waterfront real estate developed a beach oriented park in 1891, built a trolley line up through the adjacent ravine - "the deep wild canyon made a most attractive route for summer riding; one of the most scenic trolley rides to be had in the city!" Thence it curved its way to a terminal at Broadway and Jefferson, connecting with the James Street cable line to town. Of course realtors along the route profited (and contributed to?) its presence. E. F. Blaine and C. L. Denny owned the real estate at the head of the ravine. They named their subdivision the DENNY-BLAINE LAKE PARK (filed in 1901) and soon built their realty office alongside the car line. It was designed by the famed architect Ellsworth Storey and conveniently contained a room to wait for the trolley car; it was sturdily built so that it could remain as a waiting station and picnic shelter after the realtors were gone - they had dedicated and developed a small park adjacent with a pool and fountain, lawn areas and walks. And they named it MINERVA FOUNTAIN in honor of the wife of Mr. Blaine - Minerva Stone Blaine.

They included several parks in their subdivision, one of which was named in honor of the wife of Mr. Denny - VIRETTA Jackson Denny, daughter of Andrew Jackson.

ELBERT F. BLAINE was admitted to the Bar in his native New York, came west to Tacoma by 1884, moving then to Seattle to practice law with John H. McGraw, living in this area. He became a Park Commissioner 1902-08 being a "most active . . . pioneering member". The Park Board became independent of City Hall under an initiative petition resulting in the Freeholders Charter - 1904. His efforts put the Board on a firm, businesslike basis, essential to putting the Olmsted Plan for the Seattle park system into effect. Thus, in 1908, he was honored as "Father of the Seattle Park System" and to his honor the Boulevard from Yesler Way to Madison was named for him. But by 1920 "Blaine Boulevard", "Frink Boulevard" and "Stixrud" Drive had been swallowed up by Lake Washington Boulevard. Also in 1967 voters approved returning the control of the Department to City Hall, and the Board became advisory. Blaine achieved fame also in state affairs, becoming "Father of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project". Upon retirement he moved to "Le Panorama" Ranch near Spokane. (1858-1942).

CHARLES L. DENNY: Born in Seattle in 1861, son of A. A. and Mary Boren Denny. Educated in California and at the new U.W. (his birth had delayed laying of cornerstone at U.W.). Was a teller at Dexter Horton Bank, engaged in insurance, realty, owned the freight steamer Transit serving Central America; partner in Denny-Renton Clay Works, and Alaska Mines; member of School Board, Firlock and Rainier Clubs. Typified "Seattle Spirit of Growth". (1861-1919).

After the realty office was "abandoned" to waiting station and park use, it soon became necessary to lock the inner doors and then to nail them shut; the windows were frequently broken. Finally in 1924 Supt. Jackson determined that it was time to better the situation. Then, or soon, the interior walls and panels between the main building supports were removed (as intended) leaving an open, roofed shelter, AND the old subdivision sign on the roof. The name MINERVA FOUNTAIN was not known except in official records. The confusion resulting from this identification as Denny-Blaine Lake Park with the shoreland park below being named Denny-Blaine Park is obvious. An attempt in 1961 to remove the sign - and confusion - resulted in the Park Board's decision to allow the sign to remain as the popular (rename) of the park.

over

The trolley car was replaced with the trolley coach in 1940 but the waiting station still serves its function. The ornate fountain was replaced with a jet after efforts to abandon the pool failed in 1952.

Some of the realtors were concerned about the preservation of open space when they platted their real estate into subdivisions, including park areas for public use forever. Others set aside park areas and developed them as Amusement or Picnic areas at the end of trolley or cable car lines which they built "all the way from town" to attract the townfolk for Sunday outings, making them aware of all the beautiful real estate available. E. F. Blaine and C. L. Denny were among these who were open space conscious by platting several small park areas in their 1901 plat of Denny-Blaine Lake Park Addition. True, they were on the route of a trolley car to the amusement-oriented Madrona Park on the lakeshore just to the south. But E. F. Blaine quickly established himself as an aggressive friend of the open space/park concept. (Refer: Denny-Blaine Lake Park for biographies.)

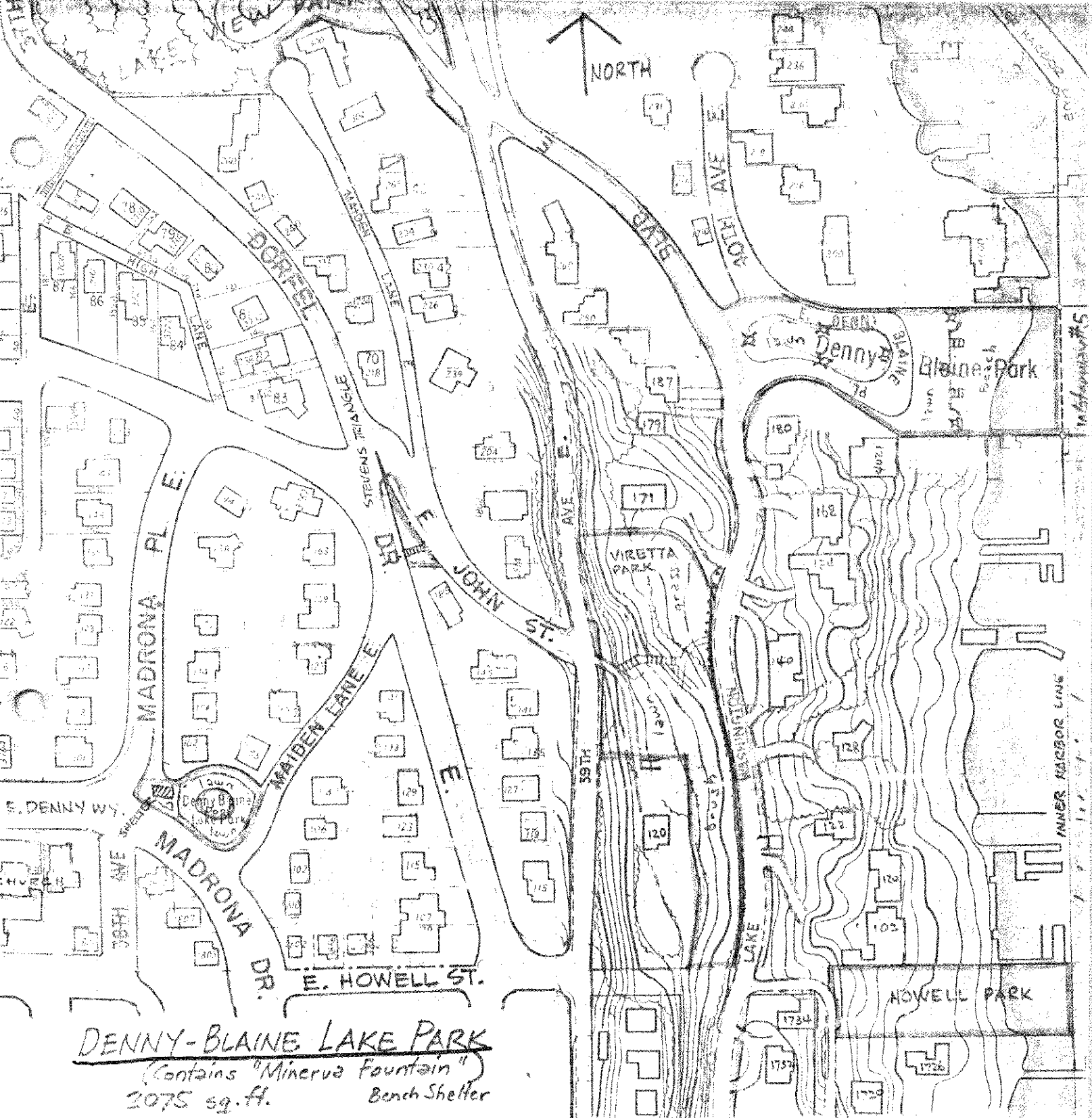
As is customary, Blaine and Denny named the streets and park areas in their plat - except for this water access with its "turnaround drive" from Stixrud Drive (named for one of the engineers who developed their plat) (later renamed Blaine Boulevard, then Lake Washington Boulevard). The area within the turnaround appeared to be a "green" area with an indication of a fountain in it and the shoreline as an "esplanade" along a seawall - the lake level was lowered by 9' in 1917. The green area/fountain was NOT named but the turnaround drive was named WHITMAN PLACE, possibly in honor of the late poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) but more probably to honor the pioneer medical missionaries, Dr. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. They came from the east to the Walla Walla area of Washington, settling among the Cayuse Indians who welcomed their arrival to Waiilatpu. Dr. Marcus was noted for his patience, self-sacrifice, tireless energy and inflexible firmness in his efforts to convert the Indians from their centuries old tribal religion to Christianity. Upon the outbreak of an epidemic of (white man's) measles and fever among both Indian and settler, the more resentful members of the Cayuse led a massacre of the Mission in 1847. To the Whitman memory have been named a County, college, a national historic site and a junior high school adjacent to Soundview PF.

For many years the Park Board reports listed "Denny-Blaine Park" as a single entry, including Whitman Place and the four other small park areas included on the Denny-Blaine plat.

A seawall with a boat and launch landing (wharf) must have been built immediately with "maintenance (only) by the Department" noted in a 1908 letter and in reports through 1916. Evidently the boat facility included an oval shaped lagoon with a narrow passage to the lake - a feature that must have substituted for the fountain and turnaround. Further improvements included a small rustic shelter, paths, lawn and landscaping. Lowering of the lake left the boat landing, lagoon and seawall "high and dry" and revealed a sloping beach that needed only cleaning of refuse and smoothing to be quite acceptable so the seawall remained as a reminder of the former lakeshore. Thereafter the state platted new Harbor Lines for the lakeshore and established Waterway No. 5 adjacent to Whitman Place.

In 1918 the City Council endeavored to clarify the confusion of multiple names for a street across multiple subdivisions or the use of the same name in widely separated subdivisions - prompted by the annexations that had just taken place. So the existence of Whitman Avenue (from Woodland Park to Lake Union) caused Whitman Place to be renamed Denny-Blaine Place. So the park area within the turnaround which soon became paved through a L.I.D. project, became better known as Denny-Blaine Park, including the new beach area. This "new" name was not confusing until 1961 when Minerva Fountain was "renamed" Denny-Blaine Lake Park.

It was not until 1932 that this waterfront park was transferred to Park jurisdiction. By then the old seawall was in disrepair and a neighbor, H. F. Ostrander, gave materials for its repair. He died prior to its completion. The beach was a popular place for the neighbors to swim until it attracted youths from some distance. There being no bathhouse or lifeguard, the boys openly changed clothes. Mrs. Ostrander had her gardener commissioned as a policeman - he happened to arrest a neighbor, the noted architect Ellsworth Storey! Then a drowning occurred and swimming was prohibited - enforced by Seattle Police.



DENNY-BLAINE LAKE PARK
 (Contains "Minerva Fountain")
 2075 sq. ft. Bench Shelter

DENNY-BLAINE PARK (originally "Whitman Place" - changed by Council - 1918)
 2.0 Ac. (Incl. 0.4 Ac. shorelands) 7 ornamental light standards / G.I.D. - paving

HOWELL ("Children's") PARK
 1.3 Ac. (Incl. 0.5 Ac. shorelands) Permit to improve w/ lawn to adjacent owner - 1930

STEVENS TRIANGLE
 3049 sq. ft. (partly paved over)

VIRETTA PARK
 1.78 Ac. Permit for landscaping + steps by letter - 1960

1901: Plat Dedication (All)
 "...to the use of public...and
 park maintenance as fountain
 and parks... forever."